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The New Developmental Test and Evaluation and the Weapon Systems Acquisition Reform Act of 2009

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Over the last 15 years, multiple studies on Test and Evaluation (T&E) in the acquisition life cycle have consistently found that the Department of Defense (DoD) needs earlier involvement and more effective use of T&E, especially Developmental T&E (DT&E) in acquisition programs. In recognition of this, and in an effort to increase systems engineering capabilities, improve cost estimating, and better assess technological maturity, in 2009, Congress enacted the Weapon Systems Acquisition Reform Act (WSARA), now Public Law 111-23. Its stated purpose was to “improve the organization and procedures for the acquisition of major weapon systems...” (S.454, 2009). Senator Carl Levin stated while introducing the WSARA bill, “The key to successful acquisition programs is getting things right from the start with sound systems engineering, cost-estimating and *developmental testing* early in the program cycle” (Weapon 2009).

The WSARA directed several actions, including establishing the position of Director, DT&E to “be the principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense and the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics on developmental test and evaluation in the Department of Defense” (S.454, 2009). The DoD established the Office of the Director, DT&E under the Director, Defense Research and Engineering within the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics. Establishing this Director, DT&E position raises the visibility of DT&E in the acquisition process and creates an opportunity to strengthen the use of T&E to provide the right information, at the right time, for better decisions.

Background

The recent law addresses perceived problems in the DoD acquisition process, including a lack of early focus, birthing broken programs, and ineffective

technology integration. The law also addresses findings from the recent Defense Science Board Task Force on DT&E, which found that a number of major changes in the last 15 years have had a negative impact on the acquisition process, including diminished government oversight, a reduced acquisition T&E workforce, and loss of key technical personnel (Defense 2008).



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WSARA implications for DT&E in DoD

In addition to establishing a Director, DT&E, WSARA prescribed specific duties to include:

1. developing policy and guidance for DT&E conduct, including software development;
2. developing policy and guidance for integrating developmental and operational testing (collaborative with the Director, Operational Test and Evaluation [DOT&E]);
3. approval of the T&E Master Plan for each Major Defense Acquisition Program (MDAP);
4. oversight of DT&E planning, execution, and results for each MDAP;
5. oversight and guidance for the DT&E acquisition workforce;
6. review of Service DT&E organizations and capabilities; and
7. submitting an annual report on major program DT&E (joint report with the Director, Systems Engineering).

The most significant change for DT&E within the Office of the Secretary of Defense, besides creating the Director, DT&E position, is the oversight responsibilities and activities. The DDT&E office has already started to conduct oversight on major programs, and as we grow over the next few years, we will engage more with all of the major and other special interest programs. In carrying out the DDT&E duties, our office will broaden its scope to examine the effective and efficient use of T&E across the complete

acquisition life cycle. The following tenets will guide our efforts:

- We will *promote* collaborative T&E policies and guidance to improve T&E and acquisition strategies and execution.
- We will *emphasize* development of effective performance criteria and communicate with program offices regarding the quality of testing.
- We will *provide* oversight of DT&E throughout the acquisition life cycle.
- We will *serve* as an advocate for T&E and for the training and sustainment of a professional acquisition T&E community.

What this essentially means for the DoD is a stronger voice and role for DT&E in the acquisition process. Enhancing DT&E will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of T&E programs, and help provide better and timelier knowledge of system capabilities and limitations to assist in reducing the cost, acquisition time, and risks associated with MDAPs. By collaborating more with the DOT&E and the Test Resource Management Center, we will be able to provide a seamless T&E effort with appropriate test resources, to acquisition programs and S&T initiatives.

Conclusion/summary

The WSARA enhanced the visibility of DT&E in DoD and provides our community a larger role to play in the acquisition of weapon system capabilities. Involvement of DT&E in the planning, execution, and reporting of acquisition T&E programs is valued and now prescribed in public law. At each acquisition decision point for MDAPs, the office of DT&E will be providing impartial risk assessments of the program's T&E effort, based on assessments of T&E planning, execution, and demonstrated system capabilities. The Office of the Director, DT&E office will mentor programs, ensure DT&E is considered early and appropriately throughout the acquisition life cycle, and serve as the DT&E advocate within the DoD. DT&E has strong support at the DoD enterprise level, and now must step up to the

challenge and show the value of DT&E involvement by providing the right information, at the right time, for better decisions throughout the system life cycle. □

CHRIS DiPETTO currently serves as the acting director, Developmental Test and Evaluation (DT&E) within the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) with responsibility for DT&E oversight of 180+ major weapons systems. Additionally, he serves as the functional advisor for the T&E acquisition career field. Mr. DiPetto is the principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense and the Under Secretary of Defense (AT&L) on DT&E. He has over 29 years of experience in the Department of Defense with extensive experience in acquisition congressional matters, energy policy, and T&E. Previous positions in OSD included assignments as staff specialist for naval weapons and for strategic and tactical airlift programs. Mr. DiPetto served with the Naval Air Systems Command as a flight test manager, planning and executing Tomahawk flight tests. He began his career at the Navy's Pacific Missile Test Center as flight test engineer for surface and subsurface launched missile systems. He earned a bachelor of science from the New York Institute of Technology in 1979. A graduate of the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School, he has flown a variety of U.S. Navy fixed and rotary wing aircraft. He is a 1994 graduate of the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, Senior Executive Fellows program; a 1993 graduate of the Defense Systems Management College's Program Management Course; and a Level III certified acquisition and T&E professional.

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